

Yosemite National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Environmental Education Campus Development Program



Background

In 1971 Yosemite National Park developed a partnership with the non-profit organization Yosemite Institute to administer Yosemite's Environmental Education Campus. Programs focus on high-quality, resource-related education and interpretation, and on providing visitors with programs that expose them to Yosemite National Park's compelling stories.

Existing bath house at Yosemite Institute's Crane Flat facility

What is the environmental education campus?

The Environmental Education Campus is designed to carry out the National Park Service mission by providing high-quality resource-related educational facilities and programs for children (school groups) and adults. The campus serves the needs of park partners¹ focused on education and interpretation, and on providing visitors with programs that expose them to Yosemite National Park's compelling stories.

In 1971 Yosemite National Park developed a partnership with the nonprofit organization Yosemite Institute (a division of the national organization Yosemite National Institute) to administer the Environmental Education Campus within the park.

The Environmental Education Campus is currently composed of existing facilities at Crane Flat, located off of Tioga Road, and is owned by the National Park Service and managed by Yosemite Institute. Park facilities at Curry Village are managed by the concessioner and rented to Yosemite Institute.

Why redevelop the campus?

The existing facility at Crane Flat is cobbled together from buildings left from the park's old Blister Rust Camp and miscellaneous buildings moved to the site after World War II. Existing facilities at Crane Flat are over 60 years old and provide inadequate accommodations for children. Additionally, operational costs have risen significantly in recent years due to increased maintenance of the aging buildings.

Facilities in Yosemite Valley were damaged during the 1997 flood and will be further modified by implementation of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Reduced accommodations coupled with increased visitation to the Valley have increased demand for overnight lodging at Curry Village. As a result,

fees charged by the concessioner for seasonal rental of Curry Village facilities are increasing—a trend that is expected to continue and could threaten the economic viability of Yosemite Institute programs, especially with respect to lower income youth.

Redevelopment of Yosemite National Park's Environmental Education Campus is necessary to meet current health and safety requirements and the demand for high-quality, resource-related education and interpretation activities at a price structure affordable to a more diverse range of students. This center will serve the unmet current and future needs of all park partners focused on education and interpretation.

What are some possible strategies for redevelopment?

A range of alternatives consistent with the park's *General Management Plan* will be presented in the Environmental Impact Statement for this project. The No Action Alternative would retain facilities and programs as they are today. Yosemite Institute would continue to split educational programs between facilities at Curry Village and Crane Flat. Because fees for use of Curry Village facilities would continue to rise, the increased operating costs would be passed onto students, potentially leading to decreased student diversity.

The National Park Service and Yosemite Institute have initiated conceptual designs for the proposed action. One concept is to redevelop and expand the facilities at Crane Flat; from the existing facility of approximately 20,000 square feet of dormitory and classroom space (able to accommodate up to 76 participants and 3 staff), to a facility of approximately 45,000 square feet accommodating approximately 200-300 participants and 6-8 staff. Other concepts include retention of historic structures onsite and redevelopment of the remainder of the campus, or creation of a larger facility.

¹ Park partners are organizations with formal agreements to help the National Park Service fulfill its mission.



Timeline

Public scoping in preparation for the Environmental Impact Statement:
Completed November 2002

Public comment period anticipated on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:
Fall 2003

If approved, initiate project development:
Spring 2004

Existing facilities at Crane Flat looking southeast toward Tioga Road

The National Park Service and Yosemite Institute have explored a range of other possible solutions. Examples include facilities at other locations within the park, such as Wawona or Foresta, as well as out- of- park locations. The National Park Service will be exploring possible options throughout the environmental process. Public comments will be sought upon release of the environmental impact statement.

What are the key resource concerns?

Existing hazards at Crane Flat include exposed heaters, overstressed utilities, failing buildings, and inadequate emergency access. If the campus at Crane Flat is redeveloped, construction and operation of the facility has potential to affect the following types of resources:

- Local vegetation and wildlife, such as the great gray owl and nearby meadows
- Visitor use patterns, including use of Tuolumne Grove and nearby trails
- Local air patterns, for example construction- generated dust and noise
- Transportation, including increased use of Tioga Road and potential conflict of students and vehicles along Tioga Road

When will redevelopment occur?

The proposed action would eliminate many existing safety hazards while sustaining high- quality, resource- related educational facilities in Yosemite National Park. The proposed project would be implemented upon successful completion of the environmental process and would likely begin in the spring of 2004.

How can the public remain involved?

Public participation in the planning process is critical. Here are some ways to stay involved in the Environmental Education Campus Development Program:

- Attend National Park Service open houses to keep up to date on the progress of the project and to view alternative layouts. Dates for open houses are posted on the park's planning web site.
- Review and comment on the draft environmental impact statement when it is released in fall 2003.
- Add your name to the Planning Mailing List.
- Check out more information on the park's planning web site.

Mail: Superintendent
Attn: Environmental Education
Campus Development Program
National Park Service
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389

Fax: 209/379- 1294

Email: YOSE_Planning@nps.gov

Web site: www.nps.gov/yose/planning